



PUBLIC PROSECUTION SERVICE  
POLICY AND INFORMATION SECTION  
BELFAST CHAMBERS  
93 CHICHESTER STREET  
BELFAST  
BT1 3JR  
Tel. (028) 9054 2444

[REDACTED]

8 November 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email dated 16 October 2018 in which you asked for the number of prosecutions, and subsequent convictions where applicable, in relation to begging in Northern Ireland over the last five years.

Your request has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

#### **Freedom of Information Act 2000**

The Freedom of Information Act creates rights of access for any person making a request for information to a public authority. The rights of access are twofold. First, to be informed by the public authority if it holds information of the description specified in the request, and if that is the case, secondly, to be provided with that information. These rights are subject to important limitations, which are designed to achieve a proper balance between the right to know and considerations of law and policy in the broader public interest.

You had asked for the following;

*"The number of prosecutions, and subsequent convictions where applicable, in relation to begging in Northern Ireland in the last five years.*

*I would like a breakdown of prosecutions and convictions per year from 2013.*

*If possible, I would like to know what court dealt with the most begging cases".*

In response please see Table 1 below detailing prosecutorial decisions issued by the PPS between 2013/14 and 2017/18 in respect of begging offences under section 3 of the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847.

Table 2a details the overall outcomes in the Magistrates' Courts for defendants dealt with under section 3 over this period. Table 2b provides an analysis of the relevant Magistrates' Court venues.

No defendants were dealt with in the Crown Court over this period.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review in accordance with our review procedure. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of this response and you can do so by writing to the Head of Policy and Information, Public Prosecution Service, Belfast Chambers, 93 Chichester Street, BELFAST, BT1 3JR or alternatively by sending an e-mail to [info@ppsni.gov.uk](mailto:info@ppsni.gov.uk). You should state clearly the grounds on which you are requesting the review.

Alternatively, you may wish to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

PPS FOI Section

**Table 1:**  
**Prosecutorial Decisions Issued by the PPS in relation to begging (section 3 of the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847)**  
**Analysis by year 2013/14 – 2017/18**

No of Decisions Issued (Suspects)

Financial Year	Summary Prosecution	Diversion	No Prosecution
1/4/2013 - 31/3/2014	30	14	-
1/4/2014 - 31/3/2015	61	30	3
1/4/2015 - 31/3/2016	68	78	0
1/4/2016 - 31/3/2017	76	47	3
1/4/2017 - 31/3/2018	40	11	-

"-" refers to a count less than 3 which cannot be provided to prevent possible disclosure

'Summary prosecution' refers to prosecution in the Magistrates' Courts.

'Diversion' includes caution, informed warning, youth conferencing etc.

**Table 2a:**  
**Defendants dealt with in the Magistrates' Courts for an offence of begging – (section 3 of the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847)**  
**Analysis by year 2013/14 – 2017/18**

No. of Defendants

Financial Year	Plea of Guilty on all Charges	Found Guilty on at least one charge	Acquitted on all charges	Other*
1/4/2013 - 31/3/2014	14	9		1
1/4/2014 - 31/3/2015	38	8	1	7
1/4/2015 - 31/3/2016	34	8	1	10
1/4/2016 - 31/3/2017	44	5		4
1/4/2017 - 31/3/2018	32	9		3

\*\*\*Other' denotes withdrawn to go by way of diversion, defendant deceased etc

**Table 2b:**  
**Defendants Dealt with in the Magistrates' Court for an offence of begging (section 3 of the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847) – Analysis by court venue 2013/14 – 2017/18**

No. of Defendants

Magistrates' Court Venue	Number of Defendants
Laganside (Belfast)	205
Londonderry	12
Other*	11

\*\* 'Other' includes cases dealt with in the following courts; Ballymena, Coleraine, Craigavon, Dungannon and Newry.